

PARENT PREFERENCES IN KINDERGARTEN
CURRICULUM PLANNING

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by
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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Educators, confronting "parent power" in the schools to a greater extent each year, are becoming aware of the need to seek out the preferences of parents as they plan school curricula.

Statement of the Problem

The problem focused on three different approaches to kindergarten programming. The following questions were studied:

1. To what extent are academic, readiness and developmental kindergartens preferred by parents?
 2. What are the similarities and differences of preferences between three specific, well-defined groups of parents?
 - a. Parents who live in a community which does not have a college located within its school district.
 - b. Parents who live in a community which has a college located within its school district and who are not employed as faculty or administrators of that college.
 - c. Parents who live in a community which has a college located within its school district and who are employed as faculty or administrators of that college.
-

Importance of the Study

In the area of kindergarten, the picture of what "should be" the approach to curriculum planning is a subject of continuing dispute. In the well known "lab schools" at the University of Chicago the emphasis of early learning is on social interaction and away from academic subjects.¹

Many experts tend to favor the "play" or "developmental" approach to the kindergarten program.² At the same time, they claim that parents are exerting pressure to "upgrade" the curriculum to include the specific teaching of academic subjects, particularly reading.³ For example, the Association of Childhood Education International comments that

Today, with concern for education very much in the public mind and awareness on the part of many that adults are going to need far more knowledge to get along in a vastly complex and rapidly

¹Jerrold K. Footlick, "Never Too Young to Learn," Newsweek, LXXIX (May 22, 1972), 93-100.

²D. E. M. Gardner, Experiment and Tradition in Primary Schools (London: Methuen and Co., 1966); Neith Headley, The Kindergarten: Its Place in the Program of Education (New York: Center for Applied Research in Education, Inc., 1965); Mamie Heinz, Growing and Learning in the Kindergarten (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1959); Marguerita Rudolph and Dorothy Cohen, Kindergarten, A Year of Learning (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1964); The National Elementary Principal, Those First School Years, Vol. 11, No. 1, September, 1960 (Washington, D.C.); Young Children, "Distortions in the Kindergarten," XXIV (May, 1969), 279-84.

³Marguerita Rudolph and Dorothy Cohen, op. cit., Foreword; The National Elementary Principal, op. cit., p. 59; Young Children, op. cit., p. 281.

changing world, a number of people are exerting pressure on the school to teach more, to start formal learning earlier and to require that learning be faster.¹

Some educators, such as Minna Browne, supervisor of pre-kindergarten and kindergarten for the school system of Mount Vernon, New York, agree that the intellectual challenge of kindergarten needs to be stepped up and experimental programs are already operative.²

Newsweek magazine Education editor Jerrold K. Footlick predicts that the public schools will inevitably come under fierce pressure for reform because they are not recognizing or building on the pre-kindergarten learning of the current crop of "Sesame Street" graduates. Forty per cent (40 per cent) of all 3-to-5 year olds in the U.S. are enrolled in some kind of pre-primary program.³ Professor Harold Shane of Indiana University claims, "There is virtually no planning of curriculum change underway at the elementary-school level that anticipates the needs of children who will bring to the primary school two, three, and

¹Association for Childhood Education International, Toward Better Kindergarten, Bulletin 18-A (Washington, D.C.: Association for Childhood Education International, 1966) p. 61.

²Minna Browne, "Is Kindergarten's Play Day Over?," Grade Teacher, LXXXV (January, 1968), 113-16.

³Footlick, op. cit., p. 93.

even four years of carefully designed experience."¹

Taking a different stance are those who view kindergarten primarily as a time of preparation for first grade, and sometimes approach it rather academically with the use of readiness texts, worksheets, and drill.²

Limitations of the Study

This study has not concerned itself with amassing support for one particular type of kindergarten programming. Rather, it has been concerned only with the extent to which parents support the academic, readiness, or developmental approaches to kindergarten.

Usefulness of the Study

Findings of this research can be useful to educators who are increasingly concerned with preferences of parents in curriculum planning. This does not imply that parents should dictate curriculum details but that parental preferences should be taken into account.³ Riles represents this

¹Footlick, op. cit., p. 99.

²Arthur F. Corey (ed.), Universal Opportunity for Early Childhood Education (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1966).

³Association for Childhood Education International, op. cit., p. 61ff; Corey, op. cit., p. 11; Andrew Stevens, Techniques for Handling Problem Parents (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1966; The National Elementary Principal, op. cit., p. 206.

type of educator who recognizes that

the demand by parents for power cannot be ignored; it is a vital component in the emerging patterns of school and community....Indications are that parents, despite their background deficiencies, will be an increasingly effective force for good in our school systems....It is well recognized that the school cannot work in a vacuum apart from the community it serves. The use of citizen-advisory committees to identify needs and to draft solutions is traditional in American education.¹

This study was designed to provide specific local administrators with summaries of the opinions of parents concerning the nature of kindergarten programs. In so doing, a method for surveying these opinions in any community has been devised.

Definition of Terms

The definition of "academic," "readiness," and "developmental" kindergartens is needed for this field study. The writer assumes some broad areas of agreement are present among the types, such as, all three kindergartens require skilled professional teachers, provide equally wholesome and stimulating environments, and furnish pleasurable and creative experiences in music, art, play activities, and social opportunities.

In the "academic" kindergarten the emphasis is on skill instruction of a type formerly reserved for the first

¹Wilson C. Riles, "Parents Advise on Policy," American Education, IV (October, 1968), 24.

grade. Children are taught scientific facts, arithmetic, writing, and reading. The alphabet, phonetics, words, sentences, and simple stories are usually taught.

The "readiness" kindergarten focuses on preparing for first grade. Children engage in many readiness activities often involving the use of readiness books and worksheets. Time is spent building a broad foundation of experiences and concepts designed to provide success for students when faced with the more formal learning situation of the first grade.

The "developmental" kindergarten takes issue with both of the above curricula. Its supporters contend that kindergarten should not be concerned with subjects but with play experiences. Broad concepts are developed through various learning experiences, but with no specific skill instruction. Kindergarten time is not spent attempting to prepare for the future but in interpreting, enlarging, and enriching the real world in which the child finds himself at present. It is a year of pleasurable play before the demands of first grade--a time of school and social adaptations.

CHAPTER II

RELATED LITERATURE

"The kindergarten, an old institution, is being re-examined in a time of ferment"¹ and educators and laymen are in the process of deciding what kind of kindergarten to support. The differing viewpoints of kindergarten programming are outlined in Volume II of the National Elementary Principal.²

One can find such opposing statements as "the play day of kindergarten is over"³ versus "the way of learning of the five-year-old is today as it has always been, the way of play."⁴

One is puzzled by "children go to school in order to learn what they live....no attempt should be made to prepare for the future"⁵ as viewed against the statement "the real value of kindergarten lies in the opportunities for

¹Association for Childhood Education International, op. cit., p. 6.

²The National Elementary Principal, op. cit., pp. 58-9.

³Browne, op. cit., p. 114.

⁴Rudolph and Cohen, op. cit., Foreword

⁵Young Children, op. cit., pp. 279-84.

preparation for the more formal learning situation of the first grade.¹

These are some of the extreme contrasts. Often the overlapping and combining of views are evident. However, three distinct approaches to kindergarten programming seem to emerge from a study of the literature.

At one end of the continuum are those who say that academic subjects have no place in kindergarten.² Curriculum should consist of child-centered play experiences, the proponents say. Gardner says that research consistently shows that schools in which spontaneous activity and learning through play is the approach are superior to those in which the "new" academic curriculum is used.³ It is interesting to note that in 1925, the "new" curriculum was the developmental as opposed to the "old" academic approach. In 1972 the roles have reversed and the academic is designated as the "new" curriculum.⁴

David Elkind, professor of psychology at the University of Rochester warns that "attempting to force young

¹Headley, op. cit., p. 32.

²Gardner, op. cit.; Corey, op. cit., p. 7; Rudolph and Cohen, op. cit.; Young Children, op. cit., pp. 279-84.

³Gardner, op. cit.

⁴Ibid.; Browne, op. cit., p. 113.

children to learn specific content may produce an aversive attitude toward academic learning in general."¹

Located at the middle of the scale are those who see kindergarten as a time of preparation for first grade.² Curriculum in the readiness kindergarten would not engage in subject matter instruction but would seek to build a broad background of experiences and concepts which would promote necessary physical, social, and emotional maturity, as well as stimulate intellectual approaches of the kind that support later reading.³ Readiness books and worksheets would be used by some.⁴

At the other extreme are those who advocate an upgrading of the kindergarten curriculum to include work of a kind that formerly was reserved for first grade. Academic subjects are taught as well as the usual art, music, safety, pets, etc. "It encompasses math work that goes far beyond counting to ten...."⁵ It often includes teaching of names and sound values of the letters, word recognition, and actual

¹David Elkind, "Misunderstandings About How Children Learn," Today's Education, LXI (March, 1972), 18-20.

²Headley, op. cit.; Young Children, op. cit., p. 282.

³Headley, op. cit.

⁴Young Children, op. cit., p. 280.

⁵Browne, op. cit., p. 114.

reading of pre-primers and other simple stories as well as "concentrating heavily on visual and auditory perception and on the development of motor and verbal skills."¹

The areas of disagreement and differences are sharply and often heatedly drawn. The "developmentalists" say, "We watch with increasing alarm the tendency of the kindergarten to take on more and more of the character of the first grade."² "The teaching of geometric figures, the letters of the alphabet, the numerals from one to ten...." put children under "browbeating pressure."³

Those who support the academic approach say, "the kindergarten of the past is kid stuff....they need real school."⁴ The experimental Follow-Through program of the Office of Educational Opportunity was launched by the federal government in 1967 for the purpose of "making the most of the learning power of the five-year-olds."⁵

General agreement is found in the literature supporting the position that schools cannot afford to ignore their

¹Browne, op. cit., p. 115.

²Rudolph and Cohen, op. cit., Foreword.

³Young Children, op. cit., p. 281.

⁴Browne, op. cit., p. 115.

⁵Young Children, "Project Follow Through," XXIV (March, 1969), 194.

public.¹ "The school is a part of the community; it uses, needs, and reflects the community. It cannot be set apart from it."² Further, participation by at least a significant part of the lay community is essential to the success of the total educational process.³

Relations between school and home are particularly vital at the kindergarten level.⁴ Many parents and other lay members are taking part in the debate over what kind of kindergarten to support:

Parents, as well as educators, are involved in talk about innovations in programs, research on children's learnings, curriculum reform movements, and the extension of schooling to pre-kindergarten children. These topics as featured in the popular press, whet public interest. Consequently teachers and administrators deal with an inquiring, questioning clientele.⁵

Strickland says, "For the first time in their history, kindergartens in some communities are being pressured to teach reading."⁶

¹Riles, op. cit., p. 24.

²Aubrey Haan, Elementary School Curriculum: Theory and Research (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1961), p. 339.

³Ibid., p. 339.

⁴Corey, op. cit., p. 9.

⁵Association for Childhood Education International, op. cit., p. 7.

⁶Ibid., p. 61.

Parents are anxious to know about the kinds of kindergarten programs offered and ask many questions. "These are questions which have to be answered and with considerable skill if there are to be continuing good home-school relationships."¹

Indeed, Haan says that in organizing for curriculum development "inquiries to parents also bring some ideas on where one might begin."² Perhaps this has been done by some educators but a review of the literature by the writer has revealed no studies that deal with the question of parental preferences in regard to kindergarten curriculum.³ One wonders at the number of references to parental preferences without any backing by empirical evidence.

A study by Wilder⁴ found that communities with higher socioeconomic standing are more exposed to reading controversies and thus are more critical of prevailing practices

¹The National Elementary Principal, op. cit., p. 206.

²Haan, op. cit., p. 318.

³American Education Research Association, Review of Educational Research (Washington, D.C.: American Education Research Association), "Curriculum," XXXIX, No. 3, June, 1969.

⁴David E. Wilder, "Special Factors Related to the Public Awareness, Perception, and Evaluation of the Teaching of Reading," a paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, February, 1965, as cited by Jeanne Chall, Learning to Read: The Great Debate (New York: McGraw-Hill Co., 1967), p. 291.

in reading instruction. Chall¹ adds that the innovators of early reading instruction were mainly schools with a large proportion of children of professional parents. These parents, she says, do not merely ask for early reading instruction; they demand it. And they favor the phonics approach.²

¹Chall, op. cit., p. 292.

²Ibid., p. 290.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

Population and Sample

The population for the study was defined as parents of children attending kindergarten, first, second, and third grades. Rationale for the selection of the population was that parents of children in these four grades had had the most recent experience with kindergarten curriculum and were presumably most likely to have interest and be willing to express preferences.

The sample was selected from two small rural communities in southern Iowa.

Research conducted by Wilder¹ led the writer of this field study to believe that the more closely a parent is associated with an academic institution of higher education, the more likely he is to prefer the "academic" approach to kindergarten programming.

To test this belief, parents were selected from two communities which are similar in geographical location, but are dissimilar in that one community has a college and the other community has not. Further, the parents of the "college community" were divided into those parents who were employed as faculty members or administrators at the college,

¹Wilder, op. cit., p. 291.

and those parents who were not.

The three sub-groups were defined in the following terms:

Sub-Group 1--those parents who live in a community which does not have a college located within its school district.¹

Sub-Group 2--those parents who live in a community which has a college located within its school district and who are not employed as faculty or administrators of that college.

Sub-Group 3--those parents who live in a community which has a college located within its school district and who are employed as faculty or administrators of that college.

Endorsement of the Study

Endorsement as a school study was obtained from the two school superintendents involved in the field study. Listings were compiled of all parents of children in grades K through 3 in the two school districts. The entire available group of parents in these two communities was used for the sample.

Data and Instrumentation

Data were obtained for the field study from the

¹For purposes of this field study, a "community" is defined as the area encompassed by the school district.

responses made by parents on opinionnaires consisting of two parts. Part I and Part II were designed as two different approaches for determining parental preferences for academic, readiness and developmental kindergartens.¹

Part I consisted of twelve statements about certain aspects of kindergarten curricula to which the parents responded on a five-point rating scale of (1) I strongly agree, (2) I mildly agree, (3) I mildly disagree, (4) I strongly disagree, and (5) I'm not sure.

Of the twelve statements in Part I, two of them were positive and two were negative for the academic kindergarten, two were positive and two were negative for the developmental kindergarten, and two were positive and two were negative for the readiness kindergarten.

Part II consisted of statements describing a readiness, an academic, and a developmental kindergarten and allowed the parents to choose the one closest to his preference.

The opinionnaire was designed to eliminate bias as much as possible by the construction of each statement and

¹See Appendix.

the arrangement of statements on the page.¹ It was also constructed so that it could be answered quickly, with a minimum of writing.

The opinionnaire was submitted for revisions to the Drake University field study advisors. After revisions, the instrument was validated by a pre-test utilizing parents of children in K-3 grades from areas outside of the two school districts used in the field study but matching the test areas in background characteristics. Forty-nine opinionnaires were returned from the pre-test group of parents. No revisions were necessary as no problems were noted from the questionnaires returned by this group of parents. Final approval of the opinionnaire was given by the field study advisor.

Operational Procedures

The use of different qualities of paper for the opinionnaires for each sub-group made it possible to sort

¹American Education Research Association, Review of Educational Research (Washington, D.C.: American Education Research Association), "Methodology of Educational Research," XXXVI, No. 5 (December, 1966); Edwin P. Hollander, "The Measurement of Attitudes and the Dynamics of Attitude Change," Chapter 6 in Principles and Methods of Social Psychology (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 188-242; David Krech, Richard Crutchfield and Egerton L. Ballachey, "The Nature and Measurement of Attitudes," Chapter 2, "The Formation of Attitudes," Chapter 3, "The Changing of Attitudes," Chapter 4, in Individual in Society (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962), pp. 137-269.

the returned opinionnaires into three groups. A coding of the respondents was made possible by blackening various letters on page two of the opinionnaires to determine those parents who had responded. Later the coding sheet was destroyed to preserve the anonymity of the respondents.

Opinionnaires including cover letters¹ and stamped return envelopes were distributed to parents by direct mail, and follow-up letters² were sent through the school systems to all parents seven days later. These letters thanked those already responding and asked for response from those who had not yet returned opinionnaires. A third letter with another copy of the opinionnaire was sent home with the school children through the schools four days later. About 80 per cent of the opinionnaires were returned by direct mail and the remaining 20 per cent through the schools.

Of the 198 opinionnaires mailed out, 156 were returned for a 78 per cent rate of return as noted in Table I. It is interesting to notice the higher rate of return (90 per cent) from Sub-Group 3 (college faculty and administrators).

¹See Appendix.

²See Appendix.

TABLE I
PER CENT OF OPINIONNAIRES RETURNED
BY THE THREE SUB-GROUPS

Sample	Opinionnaires Mailed to Parents	Opinionnaires Returned by Parents	Percentage of Return
Sub-Group 1	67	53	79
Sub-Group 2	81	58	71
Sub-Group 3	<u>50</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>90</u>
TOTAL	198	156	78

Analysis

The opinionnaires were hand sorted into the three sub-group categories. The opinionnaires were counted and duplicates were discarded. Then the opinionnaires were examined for completeness and the incomplete ones were eliminated where possible. A random discard method was used to bring the returns for Sub-Groups 1 and 2 to 50 opinionnaires as planned in the design of research. Sub-Group 3 had 45 opinionnaires returned and all were used.

Responses were tabulated manually in array form. Continual checks were made for recording errors. Frequency tables of the data from the three sub-groups were devised. Frequencies were converted to both percentages and summed ratings, and reported using tables and figures. A check was made for possible computational errors.

A summed rating for each item in Part I was determined by weighting each "I strongly agree" response with a +2, "I mildly agree" with a +1, "I mildly disagree" with a -1, "I strongly disagree" with a -2, and "I'm not sure" with 0 for those stated positively and the reverse of this weighting for those stated negatively.

Analysis was executed in terms of the three subgroups as well as the total sample.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Part I of the Opinionnaire

Statement 1 -- "We put five-year-olds under too much pressure when we expect them to learn to read and write in kindergarten."

(This statement was negative for the academic kindergarten. Parents who disagreed tended to favor the academic kindergarten.)

Sixty-one per cent of the sample disagreed with this statement, 32 per cent agreed and 7 per cent were not sure as shown in Table II. In most cases it was more revealing to look at each statement in terms of the three sub-groups. For example, although 50 per cent of Sub-Group 1 (non-college community) disagreed with this statement, the percentage of disagreement increased with each sub-group to 75 per cent for Sub-Group 3, (college faculty and administrators).

TABLE II

COMBINED PER CENT OF AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT OF
PARENTAL PREFERENCES RELATING TO STATEMENT 1

Sample	Per Cent Agree	Per Cent Disagree	Per Cent Not Sure	Total
Combined	32	61	7	100
Sub-Group 1	44	50	6	100
Sub-Group 2	32	60	8	100
Sub-Group 3	17	75	7	99

As the responses were refined into smaller categories 11 per cent of all parents strongly agreed, 21 per cent mildly agreed, 34 per cent mildly disagreed, 27 per cent strongly disagreed and 7 per cent were not sure as shown in Table III.

TABLE III

PER CENT OF PARENTAL PREFERENCES
RELATING TO STATEMENT 1

Sample	I Strongly Agree	I Mildly Agree	I Mildly Disagree	I Strongly Disagree	I Am Not Sure	Total
Combined	11	21	34	27	7	100
Sub-Group 1	12	32	30	20	6	100
Sub-Group 2	16	16	38	22	8	100
Sub-Group 3	4	13	33	42	7	99

When the data were placed in summed ratings as shown in Table IV it was again apparent that the amount of disagreement increased with each sub-group. All three sub-groups disagreed with Statement 1.

TABLE IV
SUMMED RATING OF PARENTAL PREFERENCES
RELATING TO STATEMENT 1

Sample	Agreement	Disagreement	Difference
Combined	- 62	+ 129	+ 67
Sub-Group 1	- 28	+ 35	+ 7
Sub-Group 2	- 24	+ 41	+ 17
Sub-Group 3	- 10	+ 53	+ 43

Statement 2 -- "Today's children are smarter--they need a kindergarten more like first grade used to be."

(Since this statement was positive for the academic kindergarten, parents who agreed with it generally favored the "upgrading" of the curriculum to include first grade skills.)

Table V shows that the sample was fairly evenly divided with 49 per cent of parents agreeing, 42 per cent disagreeing and 9 per cent not sure. Sub-Groups 1 and 2 exhibited a similarity of preferences on this statement but 60 per cent of Sub-Group 3 (college faculty and

administrators) agreed with Statement 2.

TABLE V
COMBINED PER CENT OF AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT OF
PARENTAL PREFERENCES RELATING TO STATEMENT 2

Sample	Per Cent Agree	Per Cent Disagree	Per Cent Not Sure	Total
Combined	49	42	9	100
Sub-Group 1	46	46	8	100
Sub-Group 2	42	46	12	100
Sub-Group 3	60	33	7	100

Strength of feeling about Statement 2 is shown in Tables VI and VII. This is readily seen in the summed rating difference of Table VII with the difference increasing from Sub-Group 1 to Sub-Group 3. According to Table VII, Sub-Groups 1 and 2 disagreed with this statement; it was only the strength of agreement of Sub-Group 3 that made the combined sample average out to show agreement.

TABLE VI
PER CENT OF PARENTAL PREFERENCES
RELATING TO STATEMENT 2

Sample	I Strongly Agree	I Mildly Agree	I Mildly Disagree	I Strongly Disagree	I Am Not Sure	Total
Combined	19	30	24	18	9	100
Sub-Group 1	16	30	28	18	8	100
Sub-Group 2	16	26	24	22	12	100
Sub-Group 3	24	36	20	13	7	100

TABLE VII
SUMMED RATING OF PARENTAL PREFERENCES
RELATING TO STATEMENT 2

Sample	Agreement	Disagreement	Difference
Combined	+ 98	- 87	+ 11
Sub-Group 1	+ 31	- 32	- 1
Sub-Group 2	+ 29	- 34	- 5
Sub-Group 3	+ 38	- 21	+ 17

Statement 3 -- "A reading readiness program using books, worksheets, phonics and word-recognition skills should not be a part of kindergarten."

(Parents who disagreed with Statement 3 favored the

formal readiness program since this was a negative statement for the readiness kindergarten.)

Of all parents polled, 86 per cent disagreed, saying in effect, that they wanted books, worksheets, phonics and word-recognition skills to be a part of the kindergarten readiness program. Tables VIII, IX, and X show again the progression of disagreement. For example in Table VIII the percentages increase from 78 per cent of Sub-Group 1 (non-college community) to 91 per cent of Sub-Group 3 (college faculty and administrators).

TABLE VIII

COMBINED PER CENT OF AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT OF
PARENTAL PREFERENCES RELATING TO STATEMENT 3

Sample	Per Cent Agree	Per Cent Disagree	Per Cent Not Sure	Total
Combined	9	86	5	100
Sub-Group 1	10	78	12	100
Sub-Group 2	12	88	0	100
Sub-Group 3	4	91	4	99

TABLE IX
PER CENT OF PARENTAL PREFERENCES
RELATING TO STATEMENT 3

Sample	I Strongly Agree	I Mildly Agree	I Mildly Disagree	I Strongly Disagree	I Am Not Sure	Total
Combined	3	6	23	63	5	100
Sub-Group 1	4	6	30	48	12	100
Sub-Group 2	6	6	20	68	0	100
Sub-Group 3	0	4	18	73	4	99

TABLE X
SUMMED RATING OF PARENTAL PREFERENCES
RELATING TO STATEMENT 3

Sample	Agreement	Disagreement	Difference
Combined	- 18	+ 215	+ 197
Sub-Group 1	- 7	+ 63	+ 56
Sub-Group 2	- 9	+ 78	+ 69
Sub-Group 3	- 2	+ 74	+ 72

Of the twelve statements in Part I, this statement (Statement 3) received the strongest amount of opposition. Only 9 per cent of the combined sample agreed with it.

Statement 4 -- "Kindergarten's play day is over!
Children need the challenge of real school subjects.

(This was a negative statement for the developmental kindergarten. Those parents who disagreed with this statement showed approval of the "play" approach to kindergarten programming.)

Table XI shows that 58 per cent of all parents did disagree with this statement with only 33 per cent agreeing.

TABLE XI
 COMBINED PER CENT OF AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT OF
 PARENTAL PREFERENCES RELATING TO STATEMENT 4

Sample	Per Cent Agree	Per Cent Disagree	Per Cent Not Sure	Total
Combined	33	58	9	100
Sub-Group 1	38	54	8	100
Sub-Group 2	22	68	10	100
Sub-Group 3	40	51	9	100

A closer look at percentages in Table XII shows a fairly even scattering of scores. Table XIII shows that Sub-Group 2 felt the strongest disagreement with Statement 4.

TABLE XII
PER CENT OF PARENTAL PREFERENCES
RELATING TO STATEMENT 4

Sample	I Strongly Agree	I Mildly Agree	I Mildly Disagree	I Strongly Disagree	I Am Not Sure	Total
Combined	12	21	30	28	9	100
Sub-Group 1	18	20	22	32	8	100
Sub-Group 2	8	14	34	34	10	100
Sub-Group 3	11	29	33	18	9	100

TABLE XIII
SUMMED RATING OF PARENTAL PREFERENCES
RELATING TO STATEMENT 4

Sample	Agreement	Disagreement	Difference
Combined	- 66	+ 125	+ 59
Sub-Group 1	- 28	+ 43	+ 15
Sub-Group 2	- 15	+ 51	+ 36
Sub-Group 3	- 23	+ 31	+ 8

The responses to this statement are particularly interesting as they seem to point up a basic inconsistency in light of the trend of the responses to the other statements.

Several parents in written comments asked that all instruction in reading, math, etc., be designed as "play."

Perhaps Statement 4 points up this desire or the feeling that "play" should not be taken out of the kindergarten experience completely.

Statement 5 -- "Kindergarteners with a background of TV viewing and various pre-school classes do not need another year spent on readiness activities."

(This was a negative statement for the readiness kindergarten. Parents who disagreed with this statement were saying that they did want their children to spend another year on readiness activities.)

Sixty-five per cent of the 145 parents disagreed, 28 per cent agreed and 7 per cent were not sure as shown in Table XIV.

TABLE XIV

COMBINED PER CENT OF AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT OF
PARENTAL PREFERENCES RELATING TO STATEMENT 5

Sample	Per Cent Agree	Per Cent Disagree	Per Cent Not Sure	Total
Combined	28	65	7	100
Sub-Group 1	20	74	6	100
Sub-Group 2	26	66	8	100
Sub-Group 3	40	53	7	100

Although a majority of all three sub-groups disagreed with Statement 5, the per cent of agreement increased from Sub-Group 1 (20 per cent) to Sub-Group 2 (26 per cent) to Sub-Group 3 (40 per cent), at the same time as the per cent of disagreement decreased.

Table XVI shows that more parents in Sub-Group 1 (non-college community) wanted kindergarteners to spend another year on readiness activities than did parents in Sub-Group 2. Both Sub-Groups 1 and 2 wanted it more than did Sub-Group 3 (college faculty and administrators).

TABLE XV
PER CENT OF PARENTAL PREFERENCES
RELATING TO STATEMENT 5

Sample	I Strongly Agree	I Mildly Agree	I Mildly Disagree	I Strongly Disagree	I Am Not Sure	Total
Combined	15	13	28	37	7	100
Sub-Group 1	10	10	32	42	6	100
Sub-Group 2	18	8	28	38	8	100
Sub-Group 3	18	22	24	29	7	100

TABLE XVI
SUMMED RATING OF PARENTAL PREFERENCES
RELATING TO STATEMENT 5

Sample	Agreement	Disagreement	Difference
Combined	- 63	+ 147	+ 84
Sub-Group 1	- 15	+ 58	+ 43
Sub-Group 2	- 22	+ 52	+ 30
Sub-Group 3	- 26	+ 37	+ 11

Statement 6 -- "I believe that most children should not be taught to read in kindergarten."

(This was a negative statement for the academic kindergarten. Parents who disagreed with this statement favored the teaching of reading in kindergarten.)

Of all parents sampled, 71 per cent disagreed, 23 per cent agreed and 6 per cent were not sure as shown in Table XVII. Again the percentages changed for each sub-group, with the college faculty and administrator parents disagreeing most markedly (87 per cent).

TABLE XVII

COMBINED PER CENT OF AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT OF
PARENTAL PREFERENCES RELATING TO STATEMENT 6

Sample	Per Cent Agree	Per Cent Disagree	Per Cent Not Sure	Total
Combined	23	71	6	100
Sub-Group 1	34	56	10	100
Sub-Group 2	22	72	6	100
Sub-Group 3	11	87	2	100

Table XVIII shows the breakdown of percentages into finer categories. Table XIX again shows a progression of disagreement as the sub-groups change from non-college community parents to college community parents to college faculty and administrator parents.

TABLE XVIII

PER CENT OF PARENTAL PREFERENCES
RELATING TO STATEMENT 6

Sample	I Strongly Agree	I Mildly Agree	I Mildly Disagree	I Strongly Disagree	I Am Not Sure	Total
Combined	8	15	30	41	6	100
Sub-Group 1	12	22	28	28	10	100
Sub-Group 2	10	12	24	48	6	100
Sub-Group 3	2	9	38	49	2	100

TABLE XIX
SUMMED RATING OF PARENTAL PREFERENCES
RELATING TO STATEMENT 6

Sample	Agreement	Disagreement	Difference
Combined	- 45	+ 163	+ 118
Sub-Group 1	- 23	+ 42	+ 19
Sub-Group 2	- 16	+ 60	+ 44
Sub-Group 3	- 6	+ 61	+ 55

All three sub-groups disagreed with Statement 6. Of all twelve statements in Part I, Statement 6 showed the second strongest preference of parents against any statement.

Statement 7 -- "The most important reason for having kindergarten is for children to learn how to play and get along with others."

(This was a positive statement for the developmental kindergarten. Parents wanting the developmental approach agreed with this statement.)

The combined sample as seen in Table XX shows 57 per cent of parents agreeing, 41 per cent disagreeing and 2 per cent not sure. The sub-group figures show that 72 per cent of Sub-Group 1 agreed, 60 per cent of Sub-Group 2 agreed, but 60 per cent of Sub-Group 3 disagreed.

TABLE XX

COMBINED PER CENT OF AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT OF
PARENTAL PREFERENCES RELATING TO STATEMENT 7

Sample	Per Cent Agree	Per Cent Disagree	Per Cent Not Sure	Total
Combined	57	41	2	100
Sub-Group 1	72	24	4	100
Sub-Group 2	60	40	0	100
Sub-Group 3	38	60	2	100

Tables XXI and XXII show strength of preferences. In Table XXII the summed rating again shows a "stair-stepping" effect among the sub-groups.

TABLE XXI

PER CENT OF PARENTAL PREFERENCES
RELATING TO STATEMENT 7

Sample	I Strongly Agree	I Mildly Agree	I Mildly Disagree	I Strongly Disagree	I Am Not Sure	Total
Combined	25	32	25	16	2	100
Sub-Group 1	36	36	10	14	4	100
Sub-Group 2	28	32	26	14	0	100
Sub-Group 3	11	27	40	20	2	100

TABLE XXII
SUMMED RATING OF PARENTAL PREFERENCES
RELATING TO STATEMENT 7

Sample	Agreement	Disagreement	Difference
Combined	+ 120	- 82	+ 38
Sub-Group 1	+ 54	- 19	+ 35
Sub-Group 2	+ 44	- 27	+ 17
Sub-Group 3	+ 22	- 36	- 14

Statement 8 -- "When kindergarten starts right out with reading, writing and arithmetic, a child can gain an extra year of learning."

(This was designed as a positive statement for the academic kindergarten. Parents who agreed with this statement generally preferred the academic approach.)

More parents (13 per cent) were unsure about this statement than any other in Part I. Table XXIII shows that of the combined sample 46 per cent disagreed and 41 per cent agreed. Only Sub-Group 1 (non-college community) had a majority (54 per cent) of parents disagreeing with this statement. Of Sub-Group 2 (college community) 46 per cent agreed and 44 per cent disagreed. Of the parents in Sub-Group 3 (college faculty and administrators) 46 per cent agreed with the statement while 38 per cent disagreed.

TABLE XXIII

COMBINED PER CENT OF AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT OF
PARENTAL PREFERENCES RELATING TO STATEMENT 8

Sample	Per Cent Agree	Per Cent Disagree	Per Cent Not Sure	Total
Combined	41	46	13	100
Sub-Group 1	34	54	12	100
Sub-Group 2	46	44	10	100
Sub-Group 3	46	38	16	100

A wide scattering of preferences is shown in Table XXIV.

TABLE XXIV

PER CENT OF PARENTAL PREFERENCES
RELATING TO STATEMENT 8

Sample	I Strongly Agree	I Mildly Agree	I Mildly Disagree	I Strongly Disagree	I Am Not Sure	Total
Combined	17	24	21	25	13	100
Sub-Group 1	12	22	24	30	12	100
Sub-Group 2	20	26	16	28	10	100
Sub-Group 3	20	26	22	16	16	100

When summed rating figures are used in Table XXV,
Sub-Groups 1 and 2 are shown to disagree with the statement

while Sub-Group 3 agrees. The figures for the three sub-groups again show the progression pattern.

TABLE XXV
SUMMED RATING OF PARENTAL PREFERENCES
RELATING TO STATEMENT 8

Sample	Agreement	Disagreement	Difference
Combined	+ 86	- 102	- 16
Sub-Group 1	+ 23	- 42	- 19
Sub-Group 2	+ 33	- 36	- 3
Sub-Group 3	+ 30	- 24	+ 6

Statement 9 -- "Kindergarten should include many planned activities to get all children ready to read, but save the actual teaching of reading for the first grade."

(This was a positive statement for the readiness kindergarten. Parents who favored the readiness curricula agreed with it.)

When the samples are combined as in Table XXVI, 45 per cent of parents agree and 49 per cent disagree, with 6 per cent not sure. However, the real significance of the figures appears when they are examined in terms of the three sub-groups. Sixty-six per cent of Sub-Group 1 (non-college community) agreed and 28 per cent disagreed. Of parents in Sub-Group 2 (college community) 48 per cent agreed to 44 per

cent who disagreed. Showing a different preference were parents in Sub-Group 3 (college faculty and administrators) of whom 77 per cent disagreed and 20 per cent agreed with Statement 9.

TABLE XXVI
COMBINED PER CENT OF AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT OF
PARENTAL PREFERENCES RELATING TO STATEMENT 9

Sample	Per Cent Agree	Per Cent Disagree	Per Cent Not Sure	Total
Combined	45	49	6	100
Sub-Group 1	66	28	6	100
Sub-Group 2	48	44	8	100
Sub-Group 3	20	77	2	99

More detailed preferences are shown in Tables XXVII and XXVIII. It is interesting to note that the summed rating differences of Table XXVIII were almost opposite for Sub-Groups 1 and 3.

TABLE XXVII
PER CENT OF PARENTAL PREFERENCES
RELATING TO STATEMENT 9

Sample	I Strongly Agree	I Mildly Agree	I Mildly Disagree	I Strongly Disagree	I Am Not Sure	Total
Combined	27	18	31	18	6	100
Sub-Group 1	42	24	18	10	6	100
Sub-Group 2	30	18	32	12	8	100
Sub-Group 3	9	11	44	33	2	99

TABLE XXVIII
SUMMED RATING OF PARENTAL PREFERENCES
RELATING TO STATEMENT 9

Sample	Agreement	Disagreement	Difference
Combined	+ 106	- 97	+ 9
Sub-Group 1	+ 54	- 19	+ 35
Sub-Group 2	+ 39	- 28	+ 11
Sub-Group 3	+ 13	- 50	- 37

Statement 10 -- "The best way kindergarteners can learn the things they need to know is through play experiences."

(This was a positive statement for the developmental

curricula. Parents who agreed with this statement were agreeing with the play approach to kindergarten programming.)

Table XXIX shows that 48 per cent of the combined sample disagreed with Statement 10, 45 per cent agreed and 7 per cent were not sure. Of all the statements in Part I the sub-groups' preferences were most alike regarding Statement 10.

TABLE XXIX
COMBINED PER CENT OF AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT OF
PARENTAL PREFERENCES RELATING TO STATEMENT 10

Sample	Per Cent Agree	Per Cent Disagree	Per Cent Not Sure	Total
Combined	45	48	7	100
Sub-Group 1	48	42	10	100
Sub-Group 2	42	52	6	100
Sub-Group 3	44	49	7	100

Table XXX provides more information about parent preferences in terms of percentages. Table XXXI shows the strength of parent preference to be fairly stable according to the summed ratings with a high degree of similarity among the sub-groups. Sub-Groups 1 and 3 agreed by a small margin and Sub-Group 2 disagreed by a small margin with Statement 10.

TABLE XXX

PER CENT OF PARENTAL PREFERENCES
RELATING TO STATEMENT 10

Sample	I Strongly Agree	I Mildly Agree	I Mildly Disagree	I Strongly Disagree	I Am Not Sure	Total
Combined	18	27	33	15	7	100
Sub-Group 1	14	34	28	14	10	100
Sub-Group 2	20	22	30	22	6	100
Sub-Group 3	20	24	42	7	7	100

TABLE XXXI

SUMMED RATING OF PARENTAL PREFERENCES
RELATING TO STATEMENT 10

Sample	Agreement	Disagreement	Difference
Combined	+ 91	- 90	+ 1
Sub-Group 1	+ 31	- 28	+ 3
Sub-Group 2	+ 31	- 37	- 6
Sub-Group 3	+ 29	- 25	+ 4

Statement 11 -- "Kindergartens which are based strictly on "play" are a waste of time."

(This statement was negative regarding the developmental kindergarten. Parents who disagreed with this statement favored the play approach to kindergarten curricula.)

Sixty-three per cent of the combined sample agreed that kindergartens based strictly on "play" were a waste of time, 34 per cent disagreed, and 3 per cent were not sure as seen in Table XXXII. Seventy-six per cent of Sub-Group 1 and 68 per cent of Sub-Group 2 agreed with the statement, but 55 per cent of Sub-Group 3 disagreed.

TABLE XXXII

COMBINED PER CENT OF AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT OF
PARENTAL PREFERENCES RELATING TO STATEMENT 11

Sample	Per Cent Agree	Per Cent Disagree	Per Cent Not Sure	Total
Combined	63	34	3	100
Sub-Group 1	76	22	2	100
Sub-Group 2	68	28	4	100
Sub-Group 3	42	55	2	99

Table XXXIII shows that 48 per cent of Sub-Group 1 and 44 per cent of Sub-Group 2 strongly agreed with Statement 11.

TABLE XXXIII
PER CENT OF PARENTAL PREFERENCES
RELATING TO STATEMENT 11

Sample	I Strongly Agree	I Mildly Agree	I Mildly Disagree	I Strongly Disagree	I Am Not Sure	Total
Combined	39	24	23	11	3	100
Sub-Group 1	48	28	12	10	2	100
Sub-Group 2	44	24	18	10	4	100
Sub-Group 3	22	20	42	13	2	99

This is noticeable also in the summed ratings of Table XXXIV where the difference scores are high in Sub-Groups 1 and 2. Sub-Group 3 showed only a very slight majority disagreeing with Statement 11.

TABLE XXXIV
SUMMED RATING OF PARENTAL PREFERENCES
RELATING TO STATEMENT 11

Sample	Agreement	Disagreement	Difference
Combined	- 147	+ 66	- 81
Sub-Group 1	- 62	+ 16	- 46
Sub-Group 2	- 56	+ 19	- 37
Sub-Group 3	- 29	+ 31	+ 2

Statement 12 -- "Kindergarteners need more than just play, but they are not ready to learn to read stories."

(This statement was positive for the readiness kindergarten. Agreement with this statement showed a tendency towards the readiness curriculum.)

As a total group 42 per cent of the parents agreed, 55 per cent disagreed and 3 per cent were not sure about Statement 12. An examination of sub-group scores is more informative. Of Sub-Group 1 (non-college community) 60 per cent agreed, of Sub-Group 2 50 per cent disagreed, and of Sub-Group 3 80 per cent disagreed as shown in Table XXXV.

TABLE XXXV

COMBINED PER CENT OF AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT OF
PARENTAL PREFERENCES RELATING TO STATEMENT 12

Sample	Per Cent Agree	Per Cent Disagree	Per Cent Not Sure	Total
Combined	42	55	3	100
Sub-Group 1	60	40	0	100
Sub-Group 2	44	50	6	100
Sub-Group 3	16	80	4	100

In Table XXXVI the greatest per cent (38 per cent) of parents in Sub-Group 1 strongly agreed with Statement 12. In Sub-Group 3 the greatest per cent (42 per cent) strongly disagreed with the statement.

TABLE XXXVI
PER CENT OF PARENTAL PREFERENCES
RELATING TO STATEMENT 12

Sample	I Strongly Agree	I Mildly Agree	I Mildly Disagree	I Strongly Disagree	I Am Not Sure	Total
Combined	25	17	32	23	3	100
Sub-Group 1	38	22	30	10	0	100
Sub-Group 2	24	20	30	20	6	100
Sub-Group 3	9	7	38	42	4	100

Table XXXVII shows the polarity of preferences between parents in Sub-Group 1 and Sub-Group 3. Sub-Group 2 is almost equally divided between those who agree and those who disagree with Statement 12.

TABLE XXXVII
SUMMED RATING OF PARENTAL PREFERENCES
RELATING TO STATEMENT 12

Sample	Agreement	Disagreement	Difference
Combined	+ 94	- 115	- 21
Sub-Group 1	+ 49	- 25	+ 24
Sub-Group 2	+ 34	- 35	- 1
Sub-Group 3	+ 11	- 55	- 44

Overview of Part I

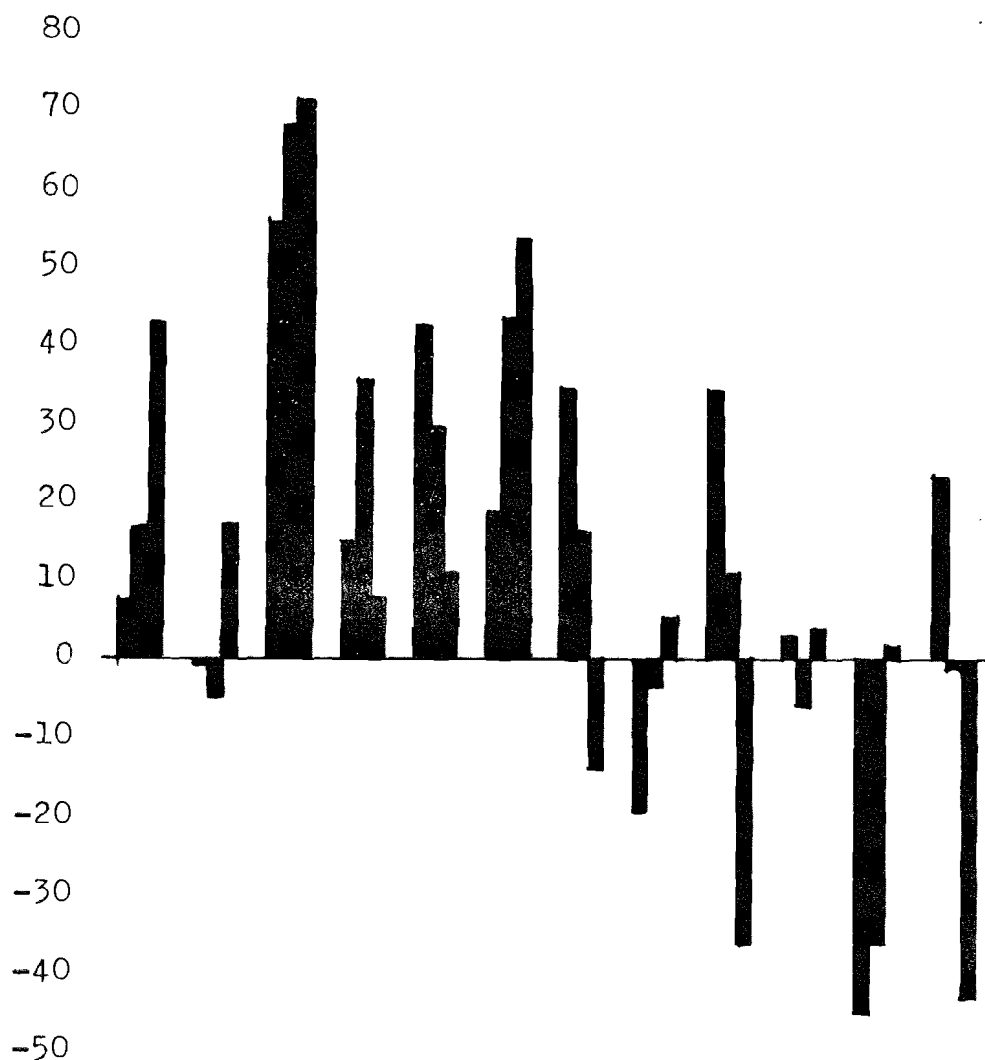
Figure 1 shows the similarities and differences of preferences of the sub-groups. The summed rating difference figures were used. Each of the twelve statements of Part I of the opinionnaire was graphed.

The scoring is such that a positive attitude, by the majority of a sub-group, toward a particular type of kindergarten would result in a bar above the line for any statement concerning that kindergarten type, i.e., an "agreement" response to a positive statement or a "disagreement" response to a negative statement. Conversely, a bar extending below the line indicates a negative attitude by the majority of the sub-group to the type of kindergarten referred to in that item, i.e., a "disagreement" response to a positive item or an "agreement" response to a negative item.

Table XXXVIII gives an overview of the extent to which each sub-group supported the various approaches to kindergarten curricula by their responses to the twelve statements. Each type of kindergarten program was represented by four statements. When all four statements were supported by parents in a sub-group, complete support of that kindergarten type was indicated.

Table XXXVIII shows that Sub-Group 1 completely supported the readiness kindergarten by disagreeing with Statements 3 and 5 and agreeing with Statements 9 and 12. Sub-Group 1 supported the developmental kindergarten to the extent

Key: A -- Academic kindergarten
 R -- Readiness kindergarten
 D -- Developmental kindergarten



Sub-Groups:	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	
Statements:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	A	A	R	D	R	A	D	A	R	D	D	R

Figure 1. Similarities and differences of sub-group preferences of Part I of the opinionnaire using summed rating difference scores.

of disagreeing with Statement 4 and agreeing with Statements 7 and 10. Sub-Group 1 supported aspects of the academic kindergarten by disagreeing with Statements 1 and 6.

TABLE XXXVIII

PART I STATEMENTS WHICH WERE SUPPORTED
BY EACH SUB-GROUP (FOUR POSSIBLE
FOR EACH PROGRAM TYPE)^a

Sub-Groups	Readiness Statements	Developmental Statements	Academic Statements
Sub-Group 1	3, 5, 9, 12	4, 7, 10	1, 6
Sub-Group 2	3, 5, 9	4, 7	1, 6, 8
Sub-Group 3	3, 5	4, 11	1, 6, 8, 2

^aThe combined per cent figures were used.

Sub-Group 2 supported the readiness kindergarten to the extent of disagreeing with Statements 3 and 5, and agreeing with Statement 9. Sub-Group 2 supported the developmental kindergarten by disagreeing with Statement 4 and agreeing with Statement 7. It supported the academic approach by disagreeing with Statements 1 and 6 and agreeing with Statement 8.

Sub-Group 3 supported the readiness program partially by disagreeing with Statements 3 and 5. It supported aspects of the developmental kindergarten by disagreeing with Statements 4 and 11. It completely supported the academic approach

by disagreeing with Statements 1 and 6 and agreeing with Statements 2 and 8.

Part II of the Opinionnaire

When parents were asked to pick one of three sets of statements¹ describing the different approaches to kindergarten curricula, 72 parents picked the academic, 69 parents picked the readiness, 1 parent picked the developmental and 3 parents picked none.

Table XXXIX reveals the per cent of preferences as shown by both the combined sample and the three sub-groups. The per cent for the combined sample makes it appear that the parents were evenly divided in preference between the academic and readiness kindergartens, but an examination of the sub-group per cents shows that 68 per cent of Sub-Group 1 (non-college community) definitely preferred the readiness kindergarten to 32 per cent who preferred the academic. The choice of Sub-Group 2 (college community) was not as definite but 54 per cent of these parents preferred the academic kindergarten to 46 per cent who preferred the readiness kindergarten. The academic approach was preferred by 64 per cent of the parents in Sub-Group 3 (college faculty and administrators); 27 per cent of this group preferred the readiness program. Just one vote for the developmental kindergarten

¹See Appendix.

was received from all the parents, and that parent was included in Sub-Group 3. Three parents in Sub-Group 3 voted for no one of the three approaches to kindergarten programming but asked instead for a combination of two or more approaches based on the needs of the individual child.

TABLE XXXIX
PER CENT OF PREFERENCE FOR THE THREE TYPES OF
KINDERGARTENS AS MEASURED BY PART II
OF THE OPINIONNAIRE

Sample	Readiness	Develop- mental	Academic	No Preference
Combined	47	1	50	2
Sub-Group 1	68	0	32	0
Sub-Group 2	46	0	54	0
Sub-Group 3	27	2	64	7

Written Comments by Parents

Besides the high percentage of opinionnaires returned, another good indication of the interest by parents in expressing their opinions about kindergartens was the high percentage (61 per cent) of parents who took time to write comments on the opinionnaire. (One parent wrote an accompanying two-page typewritten letter!)

In Table XL it is seen that of the sub-groups, the college faculty and administrators of Sub-Group 3 had the

highest number (80 per cent) of written comments and the most numerous mention (51 per cent) of individual differences. In addition, their comments were generally lengthier and more critical.

TABLE XL
WRITTEN COMMENTS BY PARENTS
ON THE OPINIONNAIRE

Sample	Responses Used in Study	Written Comments		Comments About Individual Differences	
		Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
Combined	145	89	61	35	24
Sub-Group 1	50	28	56	7	14
Sub-Group 2	50	25	50	5	10
Sub-Group 3	45	36	80	23	51

One striking factor in the written comments by parents was that 35 parents (24 per cent) made specific mention of the need to provide for individual differences in kindergarten programming. As one parent in Sub-Group 2 expressed it,

The most accurate answer to most of the statements on the opinionnaire in my opinion would have been under a heading of 'It depends upon the child.'

Sub-Group 1 Comments (Non-college community)

Many of the comments reflected values held by those

with the developmental point of view to kindergarten curricula. The following comments were typical:

Teachers should be pushing to get pressure off the kids--not put it on!

Don't try to get our children to grow too fast as it happens fast enough now.

My opinion is that a five-year old has a pretty hard time adjusting to school and learning to share and participate and be a good loser and adjusting to someone besides mother controlling him.

The first part of kindergarten should be learning to be quiet and following directions.

Learning to play together, sharing, is so important.

I think children in the age group 5-6 shouldn't be pushed too hard. They need time to relate to others and develop slowly this first year and develop happy ideas associated with school and other children.

Other parents saw the need for some kind of improvement of the kindergarten program. They posed some interesting questions and supplied some thoughtful answers:

I believe kindergarten as we have now, retards learning not only at age 5-6 but all through school.

School is dull. There should be play periods of song, clay and simple art, of study trips and birds and flowers.

Couldn't it be a little harder and yet have the ease of fun?

I have found that kindergarten play left children with a fake concept of what school really is. Simple learning was a bigger benefit. Most children with TV educational programs at home from ages 3-5 have surpassed kindergarten already. Those who learned simple phonics, arithmetic, reading, etc., in kindergarten had one more year of basic learning hence were better students.

Our girl is in kindergarten this year and is so very ready to learn; but so far--almost nothing. I realize some children aren't ready to take on what she is. What is the answer?

Separating these children is what needs to be done.

I wish they could be divided into groups of what they can do instead of what's expected. Some would surprise you how far they could go.

The ideal situation would be two teachers for each class--giving the slower ones extra attention and letting the faster ones go at their own speed. Whatever is done someone always complains!

Since there are so many differences in the types of opinions about kindergarten among these parents, the preceding comment is quite astute--whichever curriculum is planned someone will complain!

Sub-Group 2 Comments (College community)

Many parents in this group were satisfied with the existing program saying:

We like the way kindergarten is being taught here.

I very much approve of the 1971-72 kindergarten class teachings. I feel each child is being taught as he is ready for each new experience, I don't feel as if our child has been or is being pressured to learn. I like the idea of teaching them that learning can be and is fun.

I have had children in both situations and I feel that the child that had a more progressive (academic) kindergarten has been a much better student.

Sub-Group 2 comments often reflected a middle-of-the-road attitude:

I don't feel kindergarteners should be pushed hard academically but yet opportunity for a challenge should be available.

We believe in a balanced program of play and learning.

We think there should be planned activities (structured) and free play time (unstructured).

They have a feeling school is all play if the kindergarten is all play.

Several parents mentioned concern for individualized instruction:

I do strongly feel a child should learn at his own pace.

Since there are all types of individuals there should be all types of learning.

If it were financially possible, I would like to see about a 1 to 10 teacher/pupil ratio from kindergarten through, possibly, the third grade.

Sub-Group 3 Comments (College faculty and administrators)

The comments of Sub-Group 3 showed clearly their concern that the kindergarten curricula be geared to the individualized approach. They said:

Each child is an individual first and foremost. They enter school with a tremendous diversity of backgrounds, exposures, interests and abilities. Kindergarten should assess each child and help him to develop in accord with his own particular talents and interests.

I think kindergartens should provide opportunities for those children who are ready to read to do so, for those who need readiness activities to have them and for still others to be engaged solely in "play" type activities.

There is nothing more frustrating than for a child to be held back when he is ready to go on. But on the other hand it is equally frustrating for a child who is not ready to go on to be pushed beyond his capabilities prematurely.

I did not check any of the three kindergartens because I feel that for some children each of the kindergartens would be what they needed depending on the child.

I would hesitate to encourage more speed in all subject areas in kindergarten if we sacrificed the individual needs and individual progressive steps which take time in the early stages of learning development.

I see a multi-faceted program that should include much play, exploration in many areas and more formal instruction in the communication skills (reading, writing, arithmetic, etc.).

Not only did they recommend the eclectic approach to kindergarten curricula, they wanted to combine academic learning and play experiences.

....with television, Dr. Seuss and pre-school backgrounds, some of the children are definitely ready to learn some reading and arithmetic skills (taught so it is like play, possibly) yet some would be pressured by this.

Why separate "play" from "reading" as though you must do either one or the other? Why not learn to read while playing?

I don't see "play" as being in direct opposition to reading, writing and arithmetic. I feel very strongly that children learn through playing. Reading, writing and arithmetic can be learned through play experiences. Too often teachers overlook this.

The method should always make learning FUN--a challenge!

They wanted recognition of the need for individualization to extend to the Iowa legislature. They commented:

Voting age is 18 now. How many years ago did we set up the rule that the kindergarten children should be 5?

Starting age should be individualized according to ability and readiness and not chronological age.

Some feeling against the developmental point of view was expressed such as:

.....to expect any teacher in one year to teach children to get along with each other would be to expect too much. Children that do not know how to play and get along with others cannot unlearn four years.

One of my children had the experience of "play-only" type kindergarten. Three others had a learning experience in kindergarten. The program was geared to their short attention span, their personal acceptance of the program and the speed at which they chose to move.....I am convinced.....that the three children of the learning kindergarten are much happier in their schoolwork, basically better adjusted to their school experience and much more eager for each new endeavor they face.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

Preferences of parents concerning the nature of kindergarten programs were presented by this field report. The purposes of the study were:

1. To find out to what extent academic, readiness and developmental kindergartens were preferred by parents, and
2. To compare similarities and differences of preferences between three specific, well-defined groups of parents:
 - a. Sub-Group 1--parents who live in a community which does not have a college located within its school district.
 - b. Sub-Group 2--parents who live in a community which has a college located within its school district and who are not employed as faculty or administrators of that college.
 - c. Sub-Group 3--parents who live in a community which has a college located within its school district and who are employed as faculty or administrators of that college.

Opinionnaires were sent to 198 parents of children in kindergarten, first, second and third grades in two small

rural communities in Iowa. One-hundred fifty-six (156) opinionnaires were sent back giving a 78 per cent return. By random discard method 145 opinionnaires were selected for use in the study.

The data obtained from the opinionnaires were recorded, analyzed, reported in terms of percentages and summed ratings and presented in a series of tables and one figure.

The major results reported in the study were as follows:

1. Half (50 per cent) of the combined sample preferred the academic kindergarten; almost all of the other half (47 per cent) preferred the readiness. Less than 1 per cent of the parents preferred the developmental and 2 per cent chose no one of the three approaches.

2. The idea of a "play-only" or developmental kindergarten was almost universally rejected as shown by the fact that only one parent of the total 145 chose the description of the developmental kindergarten in Part II. Also, the statement receiving the least amount of support in Part I was Statement 11. Only 34 per cent of parents said that kindergartens which are based strictly on "play" are not a waste of time.

However, many parents, especially the college faculty and administrators, did not want to give up the idea of some play-time in kindergarten, but along with it they wanted

readiness activities and/or academic subjects.

3. Parents who supported one type of kindergarten did not reject all of the aspects of the other two types of kindergartens. Sub-Group 1 which preferred the readiness kindergarten still accepted aspects of the developmental and academic kindergartens. Sub-Group 2, slightly preferring the academic approach, supported all three types. Sub-Group 3 which supported the academic, still accepted certain statements relating to the other two kindergarten curricula.

4. Since each of the three sub-groups expressed different preferences on most aspects of kindergarten programming, the most significant findings were obtained from an examination of the sub-group scores. The differences between the sub-groups were often diametrically opposed so the combining of the sample merely leveled off the scores. For example, Sub-Group 1 preferred the readiness kindergarten 68 per cent to 32 per cent for the academic. Sub-Group 2 slightly favored the academic kindergarten 54 per cent to 46 per cent for the readiness. Sub-Group 3 preferred the academic kindergarten 65 per cent to 27 per cent for the readiness with 2 per cent preferring the developmental.

5. Parents (86 per cent) believe that a reading readiness program using books, worksheets, phonics and word-recognition skills should be a part of kindergarten. On this point all three sub-groups strongly agreed as evidenced by data obtained by Part I, Statement 3 of the opinionnaire.

6. Parents (71 per cent) agreed that most children should be taught to read in kindergarten as indicated by Part I, Statement 6 of the opinionnaire. Over half of each sub-group concurred with this, with the strength of the preference increasing with each sub-group up to 87 per cent of Sub-Group 3.

7. Many parents have a high regard for individualization of instruction as shown by the written comments on the opinionnaires. Some are dissatisfied because children are held back while others are unhappy because children are forced ahead. Generally they don't want children frustrated by rigid curriculum requirements. They want to see the three different approaches at work in a single classroom.

Conclusions

On the basis of the data obtained in the study the following conclusions were presented:

1. Parents are interested in expressing their opinions about kindergartens. The per cent of returns of opinionnaires and the volume of written comments seemed to be an indication of a wish for parental involvement in developing ideas about kindergarten curricula. Administrators who wish to promote a certain curriculum need to do a good job of "selling" parents, since parents do have set preferences already.

2. A specific sub-group can hold values about

kindergarten curricula which are different from other sub-groups. The implications of this conclusion are that an administrator who wishes to please parents needs to seek out the preferences of his own school community before developing his school's curriculum.

3. Parents are not unified in their preferences about kindergartens. Since the study supported the concept that within any homogeneous sub-group wide differences of opinion exist, an administrator who wishes to improve home-school relationships should give parents the rationale for his school's particular approach. He should face the fact that not all of his public will be satisfied unless, perhaps, he uses the eclectic approach.

4. An administrator with more than one specific group of parents within his school community (as in the case of Sub-Groups 2 and 3 in the college community) is going to have a harder job in reconciling the differences of preferences of the sub-groups.

5. The data collected by this field study supported the belief that the more closely a parent is associated with an academic institution of higher education, the more likely he is to prefer the "academic" approach to kindergarten curricula.

Recommendations for Further Study

1. A duplicate study could be conducted using other

college and non-college communities to see if results are consistent with results of this study.

2. Preferences of parents in urban areas could be obtained. What are the similarities and differences of their opinions to those found in this study?

3. In-depth interviews could be conducted with parents to uncover the more complex reasoning underlying their preferences in the area of kindergarten curricula.

4. Studies could be carried out regarding preferences of parents with variables other than the degree of association with an institution of higher education (such as income, occupation, race, religion, sex of parent responding, etc.).

5. Parent preferences in areas other than kindergarten curricula could be obtained by opinionnaires of similar design.

6. Since many parents asked for individualization of instruction at the kindergarten level, research could be developed that will discover how parents propose to accomplish this. Would they favor hiring additional teachers to diminish the teacher-pupil ratio? Are parents willing to support a change in the length or frequency of the kindergarten sessions? Are parents willing to pay for special materials such as those used in the Montessori Schools that allow for increased individualization of instruction?

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APPENDIX

524 W. 7th St.
Lamoni, Iowa
March 15, 1972

Dear

What parents think about school is of special importance today. More and more, educators want to know the preferences of parents as they plan school programs. When I picked a topic for research for my Master's degree in education I chose the vital area of kindergarten curricula.

Kindergarten experts disagree among themselves as to what the kindergarten program should be. I wondered what the parents think about kindergartens. Your superintendent, Mr. Riekema, would like to know, too, and he has endorsed this as a school study.

This opinionnaire is offered as a chance to express your views to your school without being identified. The results will be tabulated and presented to Mr. Riekema.

Your opinions are important to the success of this study because your child is in or has been in kindergarten within the past three years. We want to know what you think the ideal kindergarten experience would be. Of course there are no "right" or "wrong" answers to the opinionnaire.

Since each person's opinion is important to the study, please fill out the opinionnaire today and return it to me in the enclosed envelope. It will only take a few minutes.

Sincerely yours,

Celia Rae Zinser
Weldon Reading Teacher

524 W. 7th St.
Lamoni, Iowa
March 16, 1972

Dear

What parents think about school is of special importance today. More and more, educators want to know the preferences of parents as they plan school programs. When I picked a topic for research for my Master's degree in education I chose the vital area of kindergarten curricula.

Kindergarten experts disagree among themselves as to what the kindergarten program should be. I wondered what the parents think about kindergartens. Your superintendent, Mr. Spicer, would like to know, too, and he has endorsed this as a school study.

This opinionnaire is offered as a chance to express your views to your school without being identified. The results will be tabulated and presented to Mr. Spicer.

Your opinions are important to the success of this study because your child is in or has been in kindergarten within the past three years. We want to know what you think the ideal kindergarten experience would be. Of course there are no "right" or "wrong" answers to the opinionnaire.

Since each person's opinion is important to the study, please fill out the opinionnaire today and return it to me in the enclosed envelope. It will only take a few minutes.

Sincerely yours,

Celia Rae Zinser

OPINIONNAIRE

LISTED BELOW are some statements about kindergartens. There are no right or wrong answers. Each statement merely expresses an opinion about kindergartens. After reading each statement, please put an "X" in one of the boxes to the right to show whether you agree or disagree with the statement.

	I strong- ly agree	I mildly agree	I mildly dis- agree	I strong- ly dis- agree	I am not sure
1. We put five-year-olds under too much pressure when we expect them to learn to read and write in kindergarten.					
2. Today's children are smarter--they need a kindergarten more like first grade used to be.					
3. A reading readiness program using books, worksheets, phonics and word-recognition skills should <u>not</u> be a part of kindergarten.					
4. Kindergarten's play day is over! Children need the challenge of real school subjects.					
5. Kindergarteners with a background of TV viewing and various pre-school classes do not need another year spent on readiness activities.					
6. I believe that most children should not be taught to read in kindergarten.					
7. The most important reason for having kindergarten is for children to learn how to play and get along with others.					
8. When kindergarten starts right out with reading, writing and arithmetic, a child can gain an extra year of learning.					
9. Kindergarten should include many planned activities to get all children ready to read, but save the actual teaching of reading for first grade.					
10. The best way kindergarteners can learn the things they need to know is through play experiences.					
11. Kindergartens which are based strictly on "play" are a waste of time.					
12. Kindergarteners need more than just play, but they are not ready to learn to read stories.					

THREE KINDS OF KINDERGARTENS are described below.

ASSUME that all of the following three kindergartens have well qualified teachers, that the children are happy and learning, and that all children have special activities in music, art, play, and sharing with friends.

BUT THERE ARE SOME DIFFERENCES between the three kindergartens described below.

PUT AN "X" in the box of the one kindergarten that is most like your ideas of what kindergarten should be.

CHOOSE ONLY ONE:

☐

In this kindergarten boys and girls use their time preparing for first grade. The teacher directs them in experiences and developing understandings as a group to give them a more common background. The things they do together are carefully planned to get children ready to do the work of reading, writing, and arithmetic which will come in the first grade.

☐

In this kindergarten boys and girls learn through playing together. No subjects are taught by sitting down and studying. Children are not taught such things as the letters of the alphabet, numbers or phonics. There are no workbooks, no tests. Children learn only about those things that interest them, for example, holidays, pets, school life.

☐

In this kindergarten boys and girls are actually reading simple stories by the end of the year. They are taught to count and do simple arithmetic problems. They write more than just their names. In fact, they are taught to do most of the work that is usually taught to first graders.

THIS SPACE is provided for anything you may wish to add:

524 W. 7th St.
Lamoni, Iowa 50140
March 24, 1972

Dear Parents:

A few days ago you received your copy of the Weldon School kindergarten survey of parent preferences.

We want to thank those who have already mailed in opinionnaires. It's been very interesting to read your comments and good ideas. That is exactly what this study is all about--a chance to express opinions in a way that will really count.

If you haven't mailed your opinionnaire to us yet, will you please do it now? The more returns we receive, the more worthwhile the study will be in terms of representing the true opinion of the whole group.

A few minutes of your time today will help in letting your superintendent know what parents think about kindergarten programs.

Sincerely yours,

Celia Rae Zinser

524 W. 7th St.
Lamoni, Iowa 50140
March 28, 1972

Dear Parent:

We still need returns from a few of you. In case you have misplaced your opinionnaire, we are sending you another so you can let us know how you feel about different kinds of kindergartens.

Will you please help by sending this opinionnaire back to school tomorrow with your child or by using the return envelope sent to you in an earlier letter?

If your opinionnaire has already been returned, thanks a lot. We really appreciate the wonderful response. We are almost ready to put together our information to present to your superintendent.

Waiting for those last opinionnaires...

Thanks very much,

Celia Rae Zinser